MARVEL
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
WOLVERINE
AND
VENOM
© 1992 MARVEL ENT. GROUP, INC.
$1.50 US
$1.90 CAN
121
UK £1.00
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ALSO:
MIRAGE™
30TH ANNIVERSARY
1962 1992
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

WOLVERINE

Sam Kieth — COVER
Terry Kavanagh — EDITOR
Mark Powers — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

pg.

WOLVERINE/ VENOM 1

CLAWS AND WEBS
Part 5 of 6
"DREAM SCARS"

Wolverine and Venom have agreed to postpone their own battle until Nightmare has been defeated. But is this brutal tag-team enough to overcome Nightmare's minions?

Writer — HOWARD MACKIE
Breakdowns — SAM KIETH
Finishes – DWAYNE TURNER
Letterer — STEVE DUTRO
Colorist —MIKE THOMAS

pg.

MIRAGE 9

"OF FAITH AND FABLE"

After defeating Hela, the Death Goddess, Mirage of the New Mutants decided to remain in Asgard instead of returning to Earth with her teammates. Now, she must confront the consequences of her decision...

Writer — JAYE GARDNER
Penciler — JOE MADUREIRA
Inker – HECTOR COLLAZO
Letterer — RICHARD STARKINGS
Colorist — CARLOS LOPEZ

MARVEL ® COMICS PRESENTS™ Vol. 1, No. 121, 1993. (ISSN # 1044-7180) Published by MARVEL COMICS. Terry Stewart, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published biweekly.

Copyright © 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.50 per copy in the U.S. and $1.90 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. $18.00; foreign $30.00; and Canadian subscribers must add $8.00 for postage and GST. GST # R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. WOLVERINE and GHOST RIDER (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) are trademarks of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, c/o MARVEL COMICS, SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Printed in Canada.

MARVEL READERS PRESENT

c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your name and address though we will withhold that info by request!

Dear Terry,

I don't usually write to this title—doing so only when the issue has been very bad or good. Fortunately, this is a case of the latter, as I was very pleased with MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #117. First and foremost, I loved the cover of the Wolverine side. It's great to see Sam Kieth doing a cover for this title again. It's also good to see that he hasn't lost his touch. He simply draws the best Wolverine I've ever seen. His interior art is also excellent, and I wish he'd get more work at Marvel. It's about time Wolverine ran into Venom, and the upcoming storyline looks to be quite excellent.

The Giant-Man story is probably the weakest of the four, but it made for great reading nonetheless. Ron Wilson, as usual, delivers in the art department. The writing got a little tedious in spots, but having Bill fight Goliath was an inspired move. Nicely done.

The Ravage story was quite to my liking. I'm very happy to see Stan Lee back writing again. The first issue of RAVAGE 2099 was quite entertaining, and this was a good follow-up to that issue. Also, Paul Ryan's pencils are always a welcome addition.

Lastly, the Ghost Rider/Iron Fist story is finally living up to its potential. D'Kay is an interesting villain. I wonder if he's related to D'Spayre... Anyway, I'm looking forward to the final chapter in this story. The Legion of Vengeance deserves a pounding after what they did to Iron Fist, and I'd like to see them get just that.

Thanks for listening. This comic is consistently good, issue after issue. Keep it that way. I have spoken!

Joe Christiano
35 Coach Dr.
Waterbury, CT 06078

Odds are that there's some connection between D'Kay and D'Spayre, Joe, but that's another story entirely...

Dear Terry,

I don't read your book.

But I used to read your book.

But now I'm reading your book for the next six issues because I like Sam Kieth and I like Wolverine and I like Venom.

And I might read your book after the next six issues if what is in those issues is as good as what is in these issues.

Oh, and thanks for making WEAPON-X into a hardback collection that I am going to get even though I own all those issues.

That's all.

Kelly Langston-Smith
1151 N.E. 211 St.
N. Miami Beach, FL 33179

Dear Kelly,
We used to read your letters...

Dear Marvel,

On the cover of your issue #117 of MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, you have Venom breaking the logo over a fallen Wolverine. This disturbs me. If you can't control your characters and stop them from destroying property such as logos, I will stop collecting your comics. I tolerated it back in THE MIGHTY THOR, when you first introduced Beta Ray Bill. He, using Thor's hammer, smashed the logo. A logo that deserved smashing, I might add. Enough is enough, though. I just thought you deserved to know.

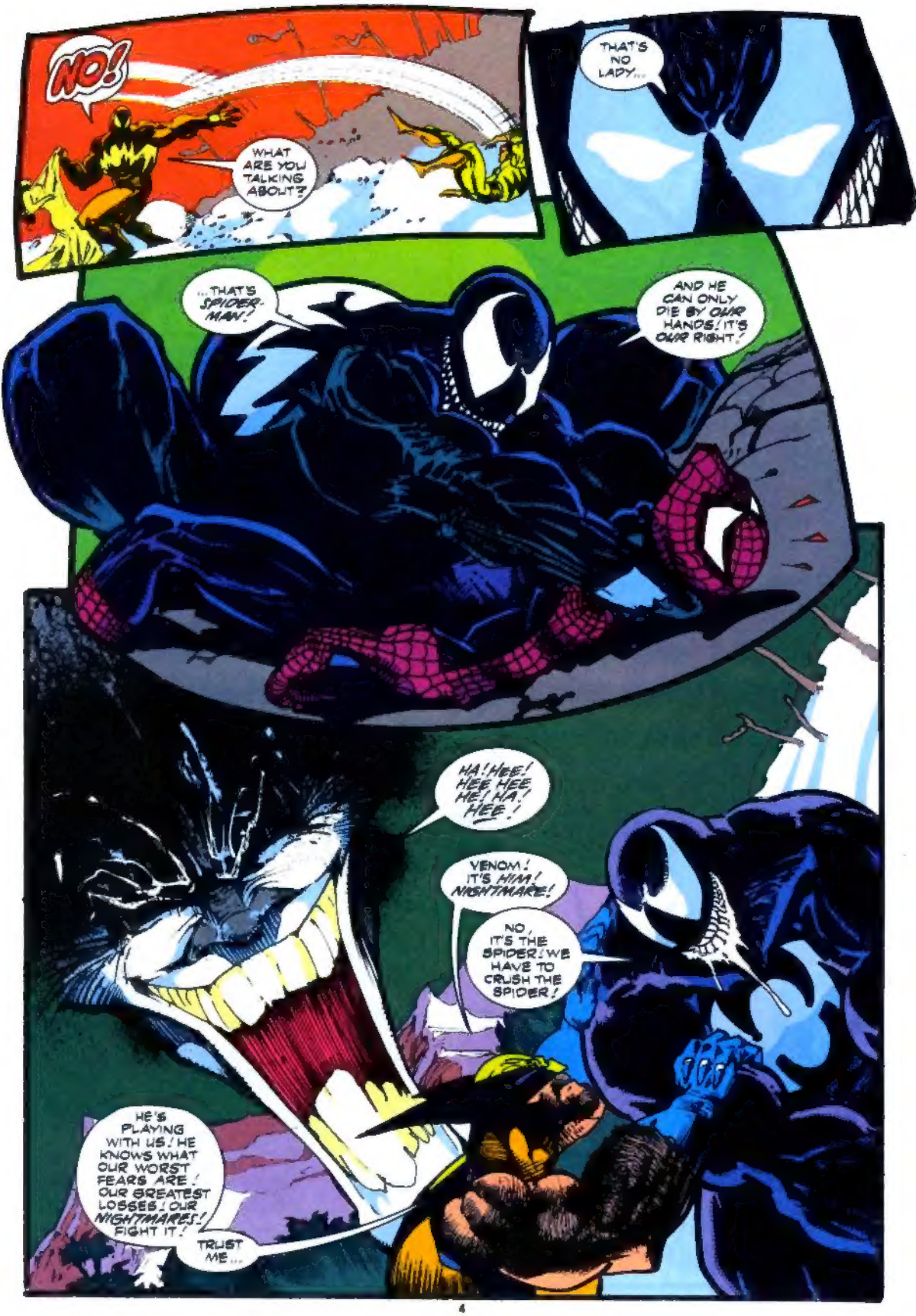
Benjamin Buckley
3610 S. Pierce St.
Denver, CO 80235

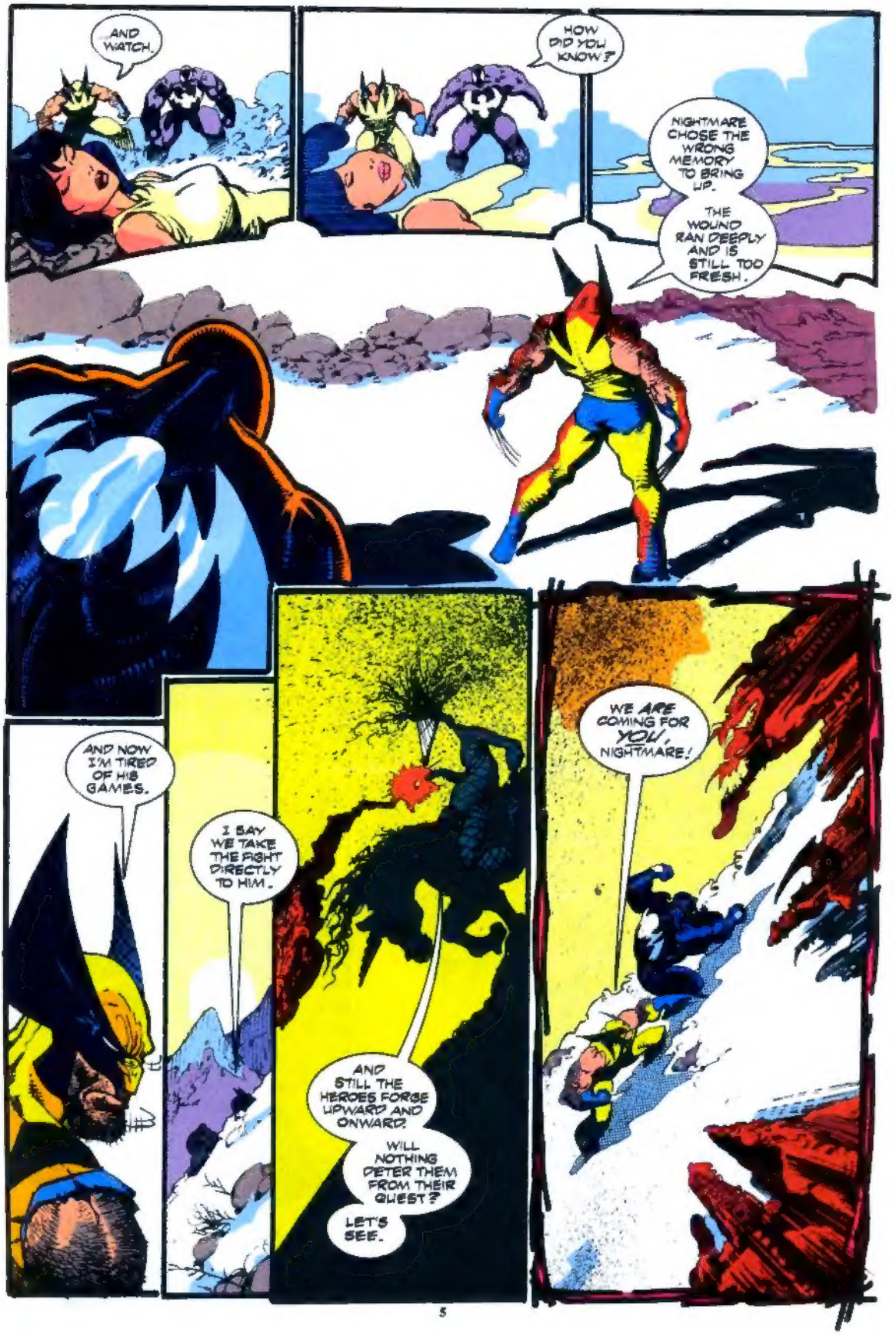
Uh oh, this letters page is getting out of hand...

CLAWS AND WEBS PART 5:
DREAM SCARS
FEATURING
WOLVERINE AND VENOM
AS BIG AND UGLY AS IT IS, VENOM, IT'S JUST ANOTHER OF NIGHTMARE'S CREATIONS.
THOUGH IT IS THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GONNA GET TO THE GIRL AND TO NIGHTMARE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO CONVINCE US, WOLVERINE...
...WE LIKE BIG AND UGLY!

HEE! HEE HEE HEEEE! LOOK AT THE BIG STRONG SUPER HEROES!
YOU THINK YOU CAN GET TO ME BY DEFEATING ONE OF MY PETS?
AND, IF YOU DID, DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT EITHER OF YOU WOULD STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ME? DO YOU THINK I'M AFRAID?
I THINK NOT.
I EAT, SLEEP AND BREATHE FEAR!
I AM A FEAR MASTER!
THE MASTER OF THE REALM OF NIGHTMARES!
THE MASTER OF MANKIND'S INNERMOST FEARS!
AND SOON THE MASTER OF MUCH, MUCH MORE!
FORGIVE US IF WE DON'T FALL DOWN SHAKING WITH FEAR!

WE HAVE IT, WOLVERINE! GO FOR THE--
I'VE BEEN USING MY ADAMANTIUM CLAWS FOR A WHILE, BUDDY...
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME HOW TO USE THEM!
OH, THE EVIL MONSTER HAS FALLEN DEAD BEFORE THE BIG HEROES!
OR WAS IT A MONSTER AFTER ALL?
PERHAPS IT WAS THE INNOCENT GIRL THE HEROES SOUGHT TO PROTECT?
PERHAPS IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE?
MARIKO.
YES, LOGAN. MARIKO. YOUR LOST TRUE LOVE.
SHE WHO WAS DYING PAINFULLY IN YOUR ARMS...
...POISON COURSING THROUGH HER VEINS.
PUT HER OUT OF HER MISERY, LOGAN.
AS YOU DID BEFORE.
SNIKT
MARIKO...
...FORGIVE ME.


NO!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT'S NO LADY...
...THAT'S SPIDER-MAN!
AND HE CAN ONLY DIE BY OUR HANDS! IT'S OUR RIGHT!
HA! HEE! HEE HEE HE! HA! HEE!
VENOM! IT'S HIM! NIGHTMARE!
NO, IT'S THE SPIDER! WE HAVE TO CRUSH THE SPIDER!
HE'S PLAYING WITH US! HE KNOWS WHAT OUR WORST FEARS ARE! OUR GREATEST LOSSES! OUR NIGHTMARES! FIGHT IT!
TRUST ME...


...AND WATCH.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
NIGHTMARE CHOSE THE WRONG MEMORY TO BRING UP.
THE WOUND RAN DEEPLY AND IS STILL TOO FRESH.
AND NOW I'M TIRED OF HIS GAMES.
I SAY WE TAKE THE FIGHT DIRECTLY TO HIM.
AND STILL THE HEROES FORGE UPWARD AND ONWARD!
WILL NOTHING DETER THEM FROM THEIR QUEST?
LET'S SEE.
WE ARE COMING FOR YOU, NIGHTMARE!

YOU CHOSE THE WRONG TWO MINDS TO SCREW AROUND WITH...
...AND MADE A BIG MISTAKE IN CHOOSING NEUTRAL GROUND.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO GAIN BY THIS CONFLICT, BUT YOU'RE WRONG!
I AM NEVER WRONG! I CONTROL EVERYTHING IN THE DIMENSIONS I CREATE!
ALL HERE ARE MY PAWNS!
HERE TO SERVE MY PURPOSES!

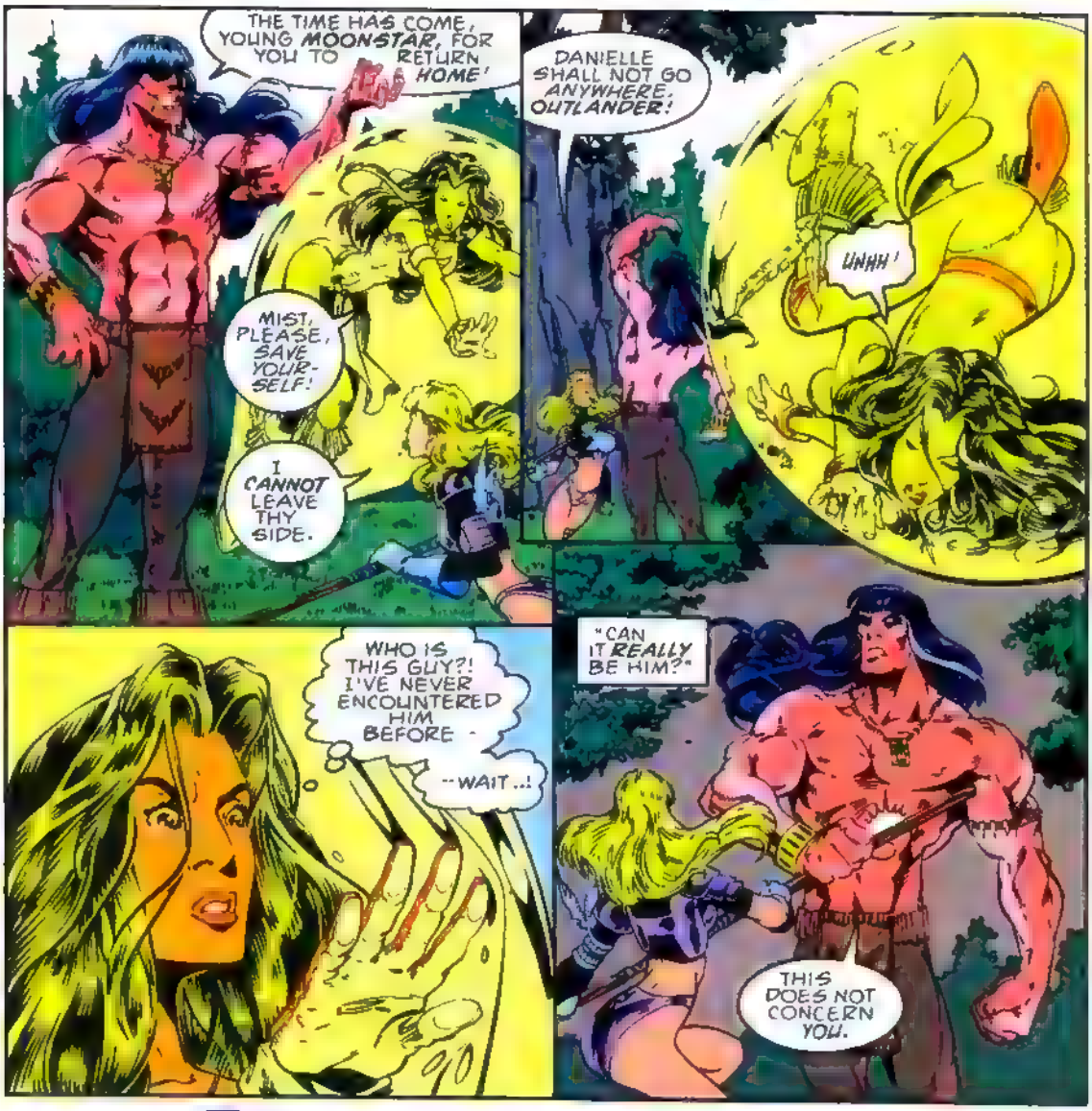
WE SERVE NO ONE!
WEREN'T EXPECTING THIS, WERE YOU?
WE'LL EAT HIS BRAINS!
NO. MAYBE NOW HE'LL BE WILLING TO TALK!
THE TIME FOR TALKING IS OVER!
THIS IS WHAT WE WANTED ALL ALONG!

HA HA HA HA
THE THREADS OF REALITY WILL BEGIN TO UNWIND!
YOU, WOLVERINE, WILL BE MY PATH TO YOUR DIMENSION.
SO YOU SEE...
...YOU WERE MY PAWN ALL ALONG!
CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE...

SCARD...
DO NOT BACK AWAY FROM ME, DANIELLE.
TO STAND THY GROUND AND FIGHT WOULD AVAIL THEE MUCH MORE!
MIRAGE IN A TALE...
OF Faith AND Fable

I AM, MIST!
'TIS A COMBAT OF STRENGTH AND SKILL--
--WITHOUT THE USE OF THY MUTANT POWER.
IF THOU WERE TRULY CONCENTRATING--
OOPH!
--I COULD NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE--
--OF THEE SO EASILY.
THUK
THOU ART DOWN, MIRAGE.
DO NOT CONJURE UP AN IMAGE TO SAVE THEE.
MY STAFF-- IT'S PINNED BENEATH ME.
I CAN'T REACH
OKAY, MIST... I GIVE.

DISTRACTION DOES NOT BECOME THEE. IS ANYTHING AMISS?
IS IT THAT OBVIOUS?
INDEED. WHAT IS TROUBLING THEE, LITTLE SISTER?
I'M NOT QUITE SURE.
MIGHT I HELP?
IT'S NOTHIN' SERIOUS, MIST.
IT'S JUST THAT I FEEL UN-EASY.
THERE'S SOME-THING HERE, AROUND US WATCHING
CAN'T YOU FEEL IT?
NAY, DANIELLE, I CANNOT. MAYHAP IT'S THY IMAGIN--
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
BACK AWAY MIST: QUICKLY!
WHAT'S GOING ON?


THE TIME HAS COME, YOUNG MOONSTAR, FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME!
MIST, PLEASE, SAVE YOURSELF!
I CANNOT LEAVE THY SIDE.
DANIELLE SHALL NOT GO ANYWHERE, OUTLANDER!
UNHH!
WHO IS THIS GUY?! I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED HIM BEFORE -
-- WAIT ..!
"CAN IT REALLY BE HIM?"
THIS DOES NOT CONCERN YOU.

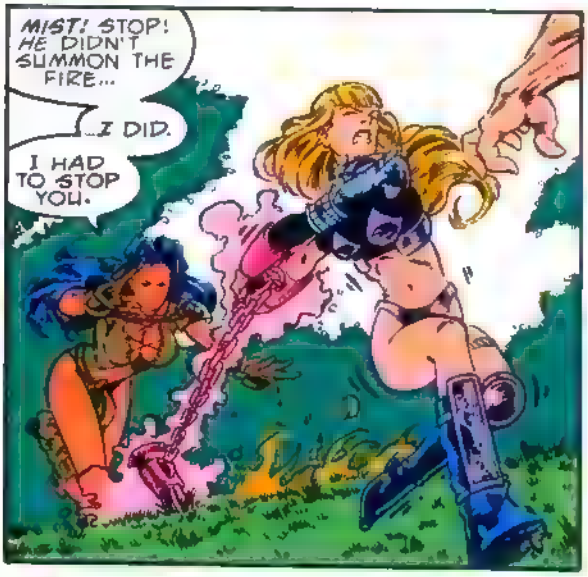
BE GONE!
KLAK
CHK
DO NOT WORRY ABOUT DANIELLE MOONSTAR.

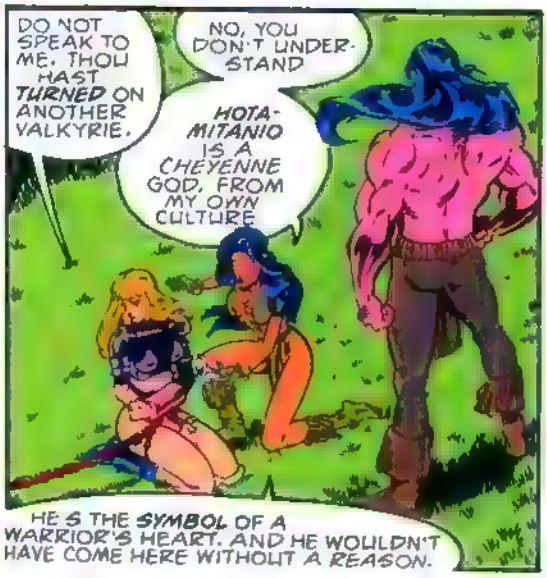
SHE WILL BE WHERE SHE TRULY BELONGS.
MIST, DON'T AGGRAVATE HIM. I KNOW WHO HE IS.
TWICE THOU'ST HIT ME
'TIS TIME FOR THEE TO PAY!
MAY THOU FIND HELA, THE DEATH GODDESS' ACCOMMODATIONS FITTING
.. FOR THOU ART ON THY WAY FOR A VISIT!
I THINK NOT, CHILD. YOUR DEATH GODDESS WOULD FIND ME RATHER UNAPPETIZING.
NOW FOR THE LAST TIME--
STOP, BOTH OF YOU!
.. BE GONE!
ADMIRABLE TOSS, CRETIN.
BUT VALKYRIES
.. TO THY DISMAY.
ARE VERILY RESILIENT.

I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE.
THIS SPHERE'S ELASTIC... SO IT MUST HAVE A STRESS POINT.
AND MY SPIRIT LANCE WILL HELP ME TO STRETCH IT BEYOND THAT POINT--
WHICH... SHOULD... = Hmh = MAKE... IT... = Hmh...
POP
OBOY... NOW T'GET THEM TO STOP FIGHTING.
BUT HOW?
FORGIVE ME, MIST--
--BUT MY BEST BET IS TO RESTRAIN YOU.

ENOUGH! BOTH OF YOU.
NNH!

FIRE SHALL NOT HOLD A VALKYRIE AT BAY, CRETIN.
NOR SHALL IT PREVENT ME FROM--


MIST! STOP! HE DIDN'T SUMMON THE FIRE...
...I DID.
I HAD TO STOP YOU.


DO NOT SPEAK TO ME. THOU HAST TURNED ON ANOTHER VALKYRIE.
NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND
HOTA-MITANIO IS A CHEYENNE GOD, FROM MY OWN CULTURE
HE S THE SYMBOL OF A WARRIOR'S HEART. AND HE WOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE WITHOUT A REASON.

YOU HAVE BETRAYED YOURSELF, YOUNG MOONSTAR, AND YOUR PROUD HERITAGE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I HAVEN'T BETRAYED ANYONE.

BY BECOMING A VALKYRIE AND RESIDING IN ASGARD, YOU HAVE EMBRACED ANOTHER FAITH AND LEFT YOUR TRUE SELF BEHIND

IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME, TO THE CHEYENNE.
BUT I'M NOT READY TO LEAVE ASGARD.
YOU ARE INSULTING ME, YOUNG MOON-STAR.
NO... PLEASE, HONESTLY, I'M NOT. IT'S JUST THAT THERE'S SO MUCH I NEED TO LEARN
THE VALKYRIAN MANTLE OF RESPONSIBILITY WAS THRUST UPON ME THE DAY I SAVED BRIGHTWIND.
I DID NOT CHOOSE TO BECOME A VALKYRIE, BUT NONETHELESS, I AM A VALKYRIE.
BY BIRTHRIGHT, YOU ARE CHEYENNE. THAT IS WHO YOU ARE, DANIELLE.
BUT I CAN'T IGNORE THE FACT THAT I'VE ALSO BECOME A VALKYRIE, WITH AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LIFESTYLE THAT IS FOREIGN TO ME.
ONE THAT I WANT TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE I RETURN HOME.
VERY WELL... I DO NOT THINK IT BEST, DANIELLE, BUT I WILL LEAVE YOU
AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE TO RETURN HOME.
YES, I WILL...
EVENTUALLY...
HE HAD NO RIGHT TO BE HERE. THOU ART ONE OF US NOW.
NO, MIST. I AM OF BOTH WORLDS.
CHEYENNE AND VALKYRIE...
...NOW AND FOREVER.
THE END.

MARVEL
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS™
AND
$1.50 US
$1.90 CAN
121
UK £1.00
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ALSO:
ANDROMEDA™

MARVEL READERS PRESENT

c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your name and address though we will withhold that info by request!

Dear Terry and Mark,

Re: MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #117:

Before we start, I just want to say that I know you are going to get zillions of letters about this issue, but could you please print my letter? Well, enough groveling, let's get on with it...

Wolverine/Venom Cover: Even though Sam Kieth's art on the covers has only been missing for a little while, I really missed it a lot! It's good to see Sam back. This cover alone makes me want to buy 10 copies of this issue! You should definitely make it into a poster. Grade: A+.

Ghost Rider/Iron Fist Cover: A good job by Steve Lightle. Grade: A-.

Wolverine/Venom: What can I say? This one has got it all! It has one of my favorite writers as well as artists doing a story on two of my favorite Marvel characters! This is destined to be one of the best stories ever in MCP! This issue is going to sell like hotcakes! (Watch out SPIDER-MAN and the X-MEN!) Grade: A++!

Giant-Man: The first chapters of "Rest and Sweet Glory" were enjoyable to me, but I had some problems with this chapter. The story seemed a little too corny for my tastes, and the artwork really got sloppy. For instance, on page 10, Goliath crawls out of the hole and then POOF, he turns into Giant-Man. And then, on page 16, I don't even know what's going on in panel one. Sorry, you get a C.

Ghost Rider/Iron Fist: Though I like these Legion of Vengeance guys, I didn't like this chapter (probably because there wasn't much action). Grade: B.

Ravage 2099: Now this is what I like! This was an excellent preview of RAVAGE 2099. I definitely plan to try out his regular series. I think you should preview every upcoming series in MCP. How about it? Grade: A+.

Overall grade for MCP #117: A-.

Ron Ste. Marie
28 South Whipple St.
Lowell, MA 01852

Listen, Ron, if we previewed every new series Marvel was putting out, we wouldn't have room for any original ones like Wolverine/Venom. We'll definitely do more previews in the future, though, as well as more original storylines. And, the next time you want a letter printed, you better do some more groveling. We really don't think you did nearly enough for our tastes.

Dear Terry and Mark,

Howard Mackie seems to have fashioned a tale perfectly suited to the artistic strengths of Sam Kieth.

The first part of the Wolverine/Venom story arc is surreal, yet scenic and foreboding. Howard and Sam take us from nightmare to shadowy reality and from dazzling paradise back to nightmare again. Mike Thomas' colors shift appropriately from soft to rich and they give life to this unreality, while Janice Chiang demonstrates that lettering can enhance a setting.

This story has style running throughout, making the covers to MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #117 a perfect set-up for the contents within.

Jan C. Childress
82 Pierrepont St.
Brooklyn, NY 11201

We're glad you liked the story, Jan. Thanks for writing. We'd like to hear what other people think, as well. So everyone reading this page should get out a pen and paper (or a word processor) and write!

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

GHOST RIDER

Joe Madureira/Hector Collazo — COVER
Terry Kavanagh — EDITOR
Mark Powers — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

pg.

GHOST RIDER/ CLOAK & DAGGER 1

AND LET THERE BE LIGHT
Part 3 of 4
"THE BRIDE OF GRIMBAT"

After learning the truth behind Grimbat's machinations, Ghost Rider and Cloak shattered their captors' bonds and set out to rescue Dagger. But Dagger has seemingly fallen under Grimbat's spell...

Writer — PAULA FOYE
Penciler — ALEXANDER MORRISSEY
Inker – KEN BRANCH/TIM TUOHY
Letterer —STEVE DUTRO
Colorist — SARRA MOSSOF

pg.

ANDROMEDA 9

"CIVIL DISABILITIES"

Andromeda finds that leading a band of Atlantean rebels against Attuma isn't always easy–especially because Attuma is her father!

Writer —KARL BOLLERS
Penciler — MARK MORETTI
Inker – JOE RUBINSTEIN
Letterer — MICHAEL HIGGINS
Colorist — FREDDY MENDEZ

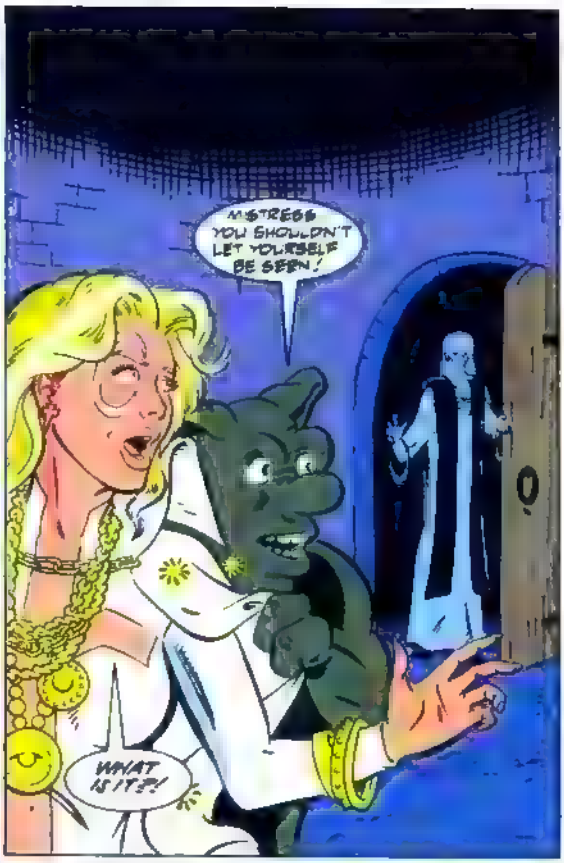
NEXT ISSUE: WOLVERINE AND VENOM FACE TO FACE WITH NIGHTMARE! GHOST RIDER IS JOINED BY CLOAK AND DAGGER IN THE FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH GRIMBAT! SPEEDBALL AND RAGE IN "TAPED CONFESSIONS"! AND, A BRAND-NEW TALE OF THE BRITISH SUPER-TEAM — THE KNIGHTS OF PENDRAGON!

AND LET THERE BE LIGHT...
PART 3: THE BRIDE OF GRIMBAT
KCHUNK
IF WHAT THIS WARDEN SAYS IS TRUE, THESE PEOPLE ARE IN GREAT SUFFERING FROM THEIR LACK OF LIGHT.
IF ANYONE UNDERSTANDS THAT, IT'S ME.
BUT IT DOES NOT MATTER TO GRIMBAT. HE CAUSES TOO MANY OTHERS TO SUFFER TO MEET HIS ENDS.
AND IF HE THINKS BARS CAN HOLD HIS, HE IS MORE A FOOL THAN I FIRST THOUGHT.
STARRING
GHOST RIDER
AND
CLOAK AND DAGGER
SKRASH

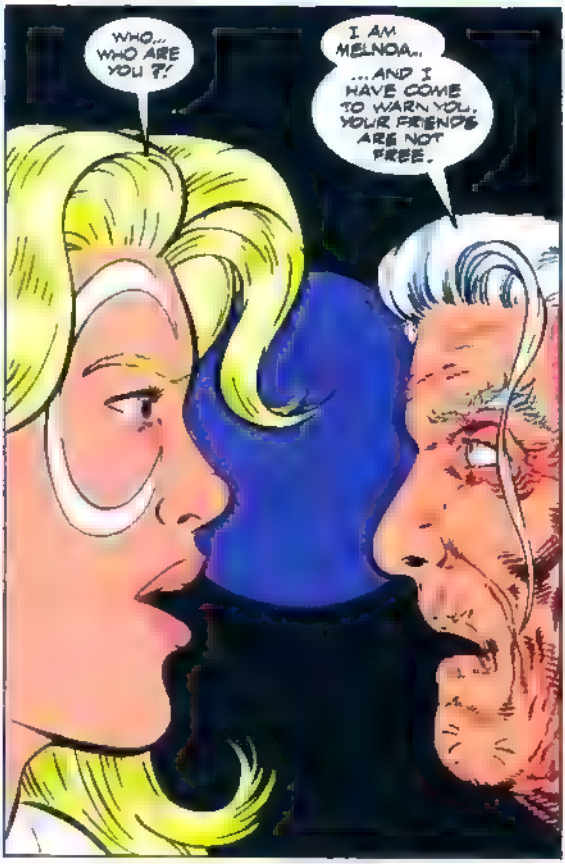
NO! PLEASE DON'T TAKE DAGGER! SHE IS OUR SAVIOR-- OUR ONLY HOPE!
SHE DOESN'T BELONG TO YOU!
WHERE DO WE GO? HOW TO GET OUT OF HERE?
OUR HEADS WERE COVERED WHEN HIS MINIONS BROUGHT US.
BOOM
OOOF!
...BUT FORTUNATELY WE HAVE MY LIGHT TO GUIDE US.
CRACK
IT'S AS IF THIS DARKNESS HAD A LIFE OF ITS OWN! CAN YOU FEEL IT?!
YES. AND WE APPEAR TO HAVE ENTERED A LABYRINTH.

NOW WHERE...?
WE'RE TRAPPED!
LOOK OUT! THOSE CREATURES WANT YOUR FLAME!
YES.
LIGHT!
LIGHT!
LIGHT!
...AND SINCE WE HAVE NO OPTION BUT TO GO THROUGH THEM--THEY WILL RECEIVE MY HELLFIRE!
OFF ME, YOU BEAST!
I'LL TAKE THEM IN MY CLOAK!
IT CLIMBS RIGHT IN!
AAAAGH!
THE PAIN OF THEIR DARKNESS.. EVEN TOO MUCH, FOR MINE.

THANK YOU EMMAD'DIN
THESE TRINKETS ARE JUST TOKENS TO HONOR YOUR GREAT BEAUTY.


MISTRESS YOU SHOULDN'T LET YOURSELF BE SEEN!
WHAT IS IT?!

GO NOW, SUBJECTS, LET ME TALK TO DAGGER ALONE.
YOU RISK WHAT YOU DON'T WANT YOURSELF!
ARRK!


WHO... WHO ARE YOU?!
I AM MELNOA..
...AND I HAVE COME TO WARN YOU. YOUR FRIENDS ARE NOT FREE.

WHAT HAVE I DONE? WHERE IS CLOAK? AND GHOST RIDER?
WHAT HAS HE DONE WITH THEM?
THERE'S A TUNNEL. IT'S A LABYRINTH--LEADING TO THE PRISON. THEY'RE PROBABLY LOST IN IT
THIS OPENS THE FLOORBOARD IN THE MAIN HALL. HOLD ONTO THE WALLS--FOLLOW THE SPIKES. THEY LEAD TO THE ONLY POSSIBLE ROUTE THROUGH.
THAT'S IT.
K-KLCK
I'VE DONE IT WITHOUT GETTING GRIMBAT'S ATTENTION. NOW... TO FIND THE OTHERS!

MORE VORACIOUS CREATURES. I'LL GIVE THEM A LITTLE LIGHT TO APPEASE THEIR HUNGER.
LIGHT!
LIGHT!
LIGHT!
FOLLOW THE SPIRIT AND...
CLOAK! I WAS SO WORRIED!
YOU ARE WELL NOW, TANDY..?
ENOUGH REUNIONS! WE MUST GET OUT OF THIS DAMN PLACE!
SOB
SOB
DO YOU HEAR THAT? IT SOUNDS LIKE WEEPING!
WHAT DO YOU CRY FOR CREATURE? COME AND SHOW YOURSELF!

SO YOU ESCAPED! NO MATTER-- YOU WILL NOT LEAVE!
YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT THAT, GRIMBAT.
YOU TEST ME, BRIGHT ONE!
WHP
LET ME GO!
I WILL NOT STAY WHERE I'M NOTHING MORE THAN A SLAVE IN A GILDED CAGE.
I ALREADY KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE.
FREE HER!
NO! IT CANNOT BE!

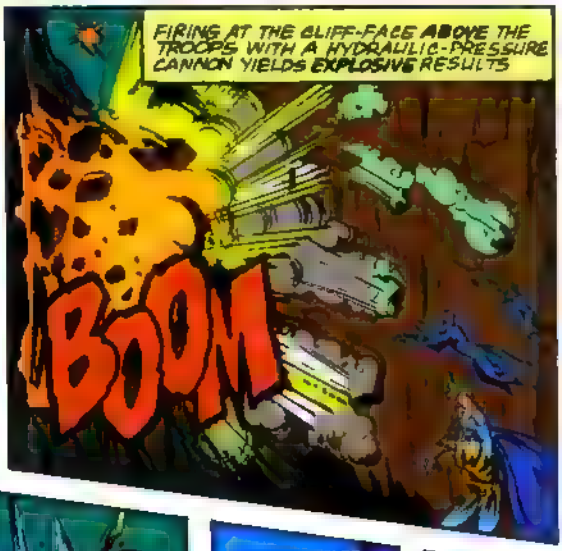
YOU WANT LIGHT? I'LL GIVE YOU LIGHT!
BE WARY!
WHO IS THE WOMAN?!
SHE HELPED ME FIND YOU, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT--?
I AM MELNOA, THE BRIDE OF GRIM-BAT!
CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE...

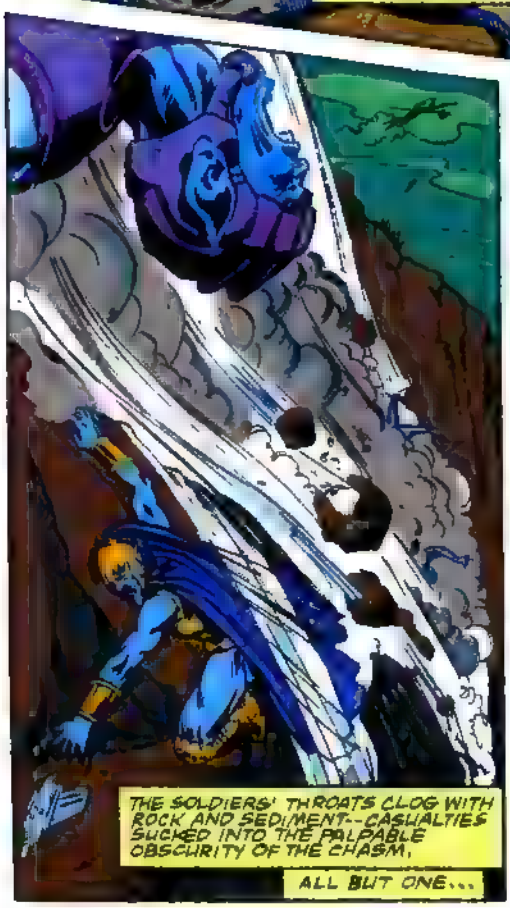
THE SURFACE... HEAVEN, A PLACE WHERE DEAD FISH RISE
FLOATING BODIES COAT THE NIGHT AIR WITH THE UN-FAMILIAR SMELL OF DECAY, A DETERIORATION WHICH HAS ITS SOURCE OVER SIX LEAGUES BENEATH THE ATLANTIC.
THE SWORDBLOW DOESN'T JOLT HER SO MUCH AS THE ATLANTEAN TROOP LEADER WHO WIELDS IT IN THE NAME OF ATTUMA--
-- NAUTAK, HER FORMER SECOND IN COMMAAND, A MAN SHE ONCE RESPECTED
IN A MAD BID FOR PRESTIGE, HE HAS COMPROMISED EVERY MORAL BELIEF HE EVER STOOD FOR, LEADING AN ARMY AGAINST AN IN-SIGNIFICANT BAND OF REBELS IS PROOF OF THAT.
"WHY," YOU ASK? WHY IS IT THAT I SERVE YOUR FATHER? LOOK AROUND YOU, ANDROMEDA...
HIS LORDSHIP HAS BESTOWED UPON ME A MOST COVETED HONOR-- DEPRIVING YOU AND YOUR HOPE LESSLY OUT-NUMBERED REBELS OF YOUR WASTED LIVES!
YOU MAKE ME LAUGH!
THEN I TRULY PITY YOU, NAUTAK. WAR IS A SERIOUS MATTER!
ANDROMEDA IN:
CIVIL DISABILITIES

TACTICAL TRIDENT MANEUVER ELEVEN EFFECTIVELY TAKES NAUTAK DOWN
BLUB
BOOM
WERE YOU REALLY GOING TO SHOOT THE GIRL NAUTAK? HAVE YOU SUNK TO THAT LEVEL?
NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT!
IT IS MINE THAT IS AT YOUR THROAT! LISTEN CLOSELY, NAUTAK...
...AND AFTER YOU'VE SCUTTLED BACK TO YOUR SHELL...
...KNOW THAT YOU STILL LIVE OUT OF MY REVERENCE FOR THE MAN YOU ONCE WERE
XIOMARA! DESPITE HIS POSTURING, HE IS RIGHT! WE ARE OUTCLASSED. I NEED YOU TO--
NO! MY HONOR IS AT STAKE HERE!
I DIDN'T SAVE YOUR LIFE FOR YOU TO NEEDLESSLY THROW IT AWAY, GIRL! YOU MUST CONVINCE THE OTHERS TO RETREAT!
HOW DARE YOU ORDER ME?! YOUR FATHER ATTUMA--"RULER" OF ATLANTIS--HAD MY FATHER EXECUTED. I MUST REMAIN TO AVENGE HIM!
IF YOU STAY, THE ONLY THING YOU WILL DO TODAY IS DIE!
"AND WHAT WILL YOU DO, ANDROMEDA?"
WHAT SHE HAS ALWAYS DONE, WHAT A LIFETIME OF RESPECT, DUTY, TRUST AND DEDICATION HAS TAUGHT HER, AS THE REBELS DEPART, SHE THINKS OF THE PAIN HER FATHER HAS INFLICTED--
--AND HATES HIM FOR IT.

I WANT HER STRUNG UP BY HER GILLS!
THE SENSIBILITY THAT COMES FROM YEARS OF BATTLE TELLS HER THAT SHE CAN'T ACHIEVE VICTORY ON THIS MOUNTAINSIDE TODAY--

--NOT AGAINST AN ARMY!
AS NAUTAK BELLOWS MENTAL COMMANDS TO HIS LEGIONS, SHE CANNOT BELIEVE IT TO BE THE VOICE OF A ONCE-TRUSTED ALLY.

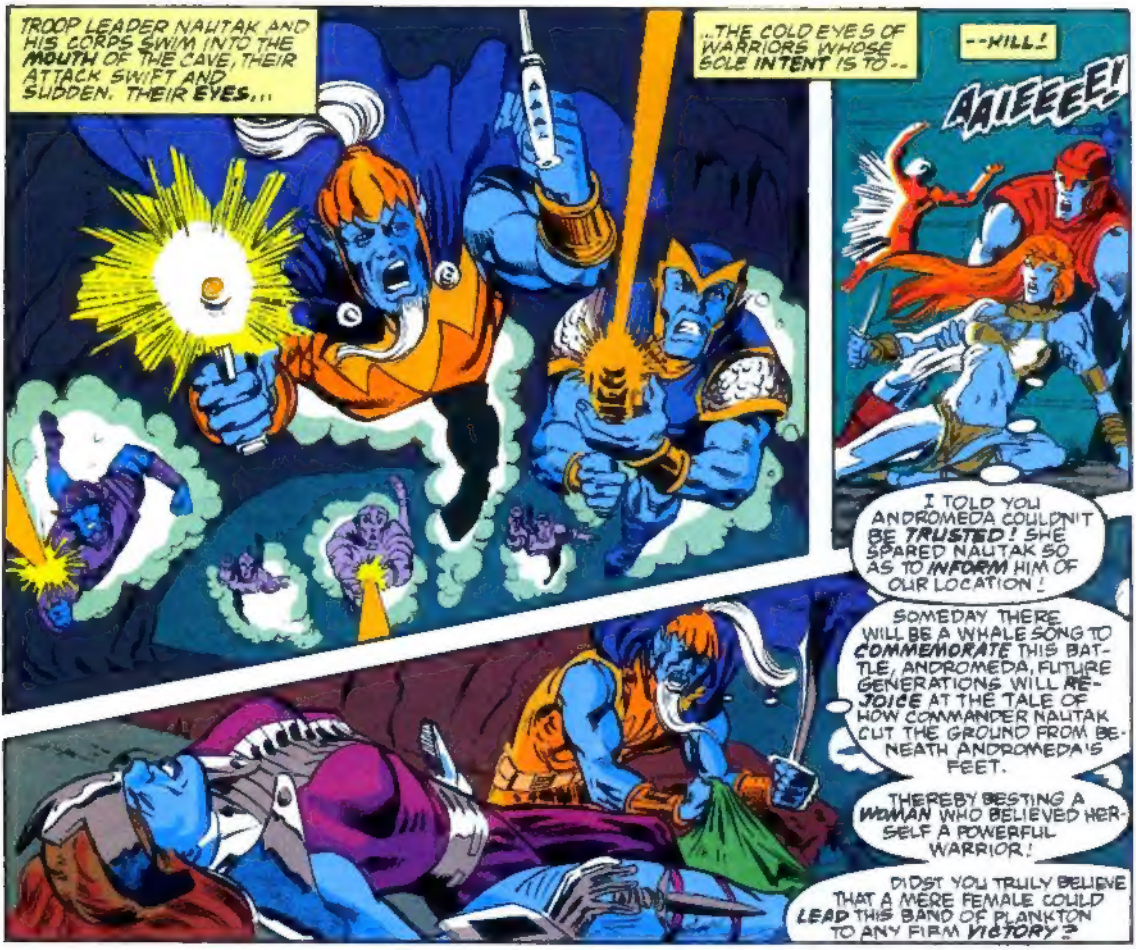

FIRING AT THE CLIFF-FACE ABOVE THE TROOPS WITH A HYDRAULIC-PRESSURE CANNON YIELDS EXPLOSIVE RESULTS
BOOM


THE SOLDIERS' THROATS CLOG WITH ROCK AND SEDIMENT--CASUALTIES SUCKED INTO THE PALPABLE OBSCURITY OF THE CHASM.
ALL BUT ONE...

SALT WATER ENTERS THE WOUND ON ANDROMEDA'S SKULL, CREATING A HALO OF PAIN--

--SENDING HER TO A VERY DARK--
--PLACE...

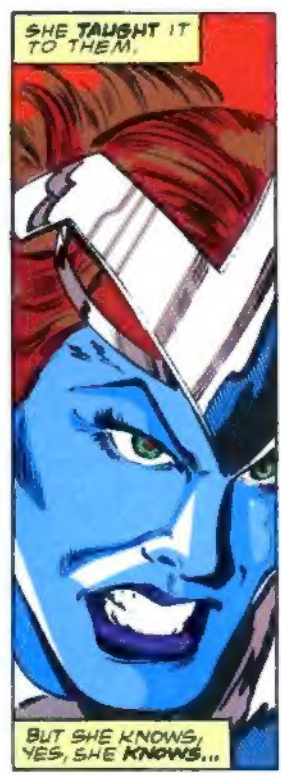
ANDROMEDA, YOU'LL BE SWIMMING IN A HIGHER GRADE NEXT YEAR...
I, NAMOR, THE SUB MARINER PLACE THIS TIARA ON YOUR BROW AS TESTAMENT TO YOUR BRAVERY...
A WOMAN WARLORD?. YOU?! SURELY YOU JEST!
SHE FLOATS BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS FROM NEBULOUS REGIONS.
A MOST DIFFICULT JOURNEY.
HER FOREHEAD PROVIDES A STEADY TRICKLE OF BLOOD THAT STEALS AWAY ON PRESSURIZED CURRENTS ABOVE, WHILE SANCTUARY WAITS BELOW.
DESPITE THE PAIN IN HER SKULL AND SEPARATION FROM HER COMRADES, THE ATLANTEAN WOMAN-WARRIOR PRAISES THE OCEAN GOD NEPTUNE.
SURELY A CAVERN TO SERVE AS CONCEALMENT FROM HER OPPRESSORS CAN ONLY BE THE WORK OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE...
ZAKT
A RAY OF HOPE ?
YOU SHOULD BE FEELING PRETTY PARALYZED RIGHT ABOUT NOW, ANDROMEDA. TO PUT IT IN A CLAM SHELL/WE'VE DISCOVERED A HIDDEN WEAPONS VAULT
YOUR FATHER'S, NO DOUBT.
A VEIL IS LIFTED. SHE NOW KNOWS WHY NAUTAK AND HIS FORCES FOUGHT RELENTLESSLY TO PREVENT HER BAND FROM TRAVERSING THESE MOUNTAINS--
--OUT OF FEAR OF THEM DISCOVERING THIS STOREHOUSE OF WEAPONS.
YOU HAVE, I'M AFRAID, OUTLIVED YOUR USEFULNESS, ANDROMEDA.
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT TOO STUNNED.


TROOP LEADER NAUTAK AND HIS CORPS SWIM INTO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE, THEIR ATTACK SWIFT AND SUDDEN. THEIR EYES...
..THE COLD EYES OF WARRIORS WHOSE SOLE INTENT IS TO--
--KILL!
AAIEEEE!
I TOLD YOU ANDROMEDA COULDN'T BE TRUSTED! SHE SPARED NAUTAK SO AS TO INFORM HIM OF OUR LOCATION!
SOMEDAY THERE WILL BE A WHALE SONG TO COMMEMORATE THIS BATTLE, ANDROMEDA, FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL REJOICE AT THE TALE OF HOW COMMANDER NAUTAK CUT THE GROUND FROM BENEATH ANDROMEDA'S FEET.
THEREBY BESTING A WOMAN WHO BELIEVED HERSELF A POWERFUL WARRIOR!
DIDST YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT A MERE FEMALE COULD LEAD THIS BAND OF PLANKTON TO ANY FIRM VICTORY?

YOU'RE HURTING, ANDROMEDA. YOU REFUSE TO ACCEPT YOUR ROLE IN SOCIETY. I THEREBY RELIEVE YOU OF YOUR PAIN--

SHUKT
IT IS A MOMENT OF BLOOD, HEAVING AND GORE. THEN IT IS OVER.

AS THE MELEE RETREATS FURTHER INTO THE BOWELS OF THE CAVERN, ANDROMEDA GLEANS THE REBELS' STRATEGY--
--EXIT THE CAVE AND SEAL THEIR ENEMIES IN WITH THEIR BLASTERS, AN EFFECTIVE TACTIC.


SHE TAUGHT IT TO THEM.
BUT SHE KNOWS, YES, SHE KNOWS...

...THAT A CONTINGENT OF TROOPS WILL BE WAITING FOR THEM ON THE OTHER SIDE.
IT'S THE WAY AN ATLANTEAN MILITARY VAULT WORKS; AND LATELY, ATLANTEAN SOCIETY, AS WELL.
HER FIRST THOUGHT IS TO SWIM AHEAD AND REJOIN THE CONFLICT... WHEN SHE SEES IT!
NEPTUNE OBVIOUSLY STILL FAVORS HER THIS DAY. HE HAS SUPPLIED HER THE MEANS TO WARN HER RANKS OF THE IMPENDING DOOM.
THIS HORN WAS NOT MADE FOR HUMAN LUNGS... IT IS UNIQUE.
IT EMITS AN ANCIENT WHISPER THAT RESONATES WITHIN THE CAVERN'S CONFINES, IT SPEAKS THE TONES OF EARLY HOMO MERMANUS.
THE HORN IS NOT SO MUCH AN ALARM--
RRARMBLE
--AS IT IS A CAUSE FOR IT!
THE MONSTROSITY RISES FROM ITS SLUMBER, A FOUNDATION SHAKING TINY REBELS OFF ITS PLATED, ARCHED BACK.
ITS STIRRINGS CAUSE WHOLE SECTIONS OF THE BARNACLE-ENCRUSTED CAVERN TO COLLAPSE...
...BLOCKING OFF THE ATLANTEAN ARMY!
KRUB-BLOOSH

THERE ARE FIVE KRAKEN STILL IN EXISTENCE. SHE LEARNED THIS IN THE SCHOOL.
TOO YOUNG TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN PRINCE NAMOR'S MILITARY ATTACK ON NEW YORK, ANDROMEDA MISSED HIS SUMMONING A DISTANT COUSIN OF THIS BRINY CREATURE...
GRAARRGH!
...SHE NO LONGER HAS ANY REGRETS.
TROOPS! THIS VAULT WILL NOT SUSTAIN THE KRAKEN'S RAGE! GET YOURSELVES CLEAR!

ANDROMEDA HASN'T FELT FEAR IN MANY CYCLES, BUT THAT PALPABLE FEELING IN HER WARRIOR'S GUT COMES NOT FROM THE POWER OF THE BEAST...

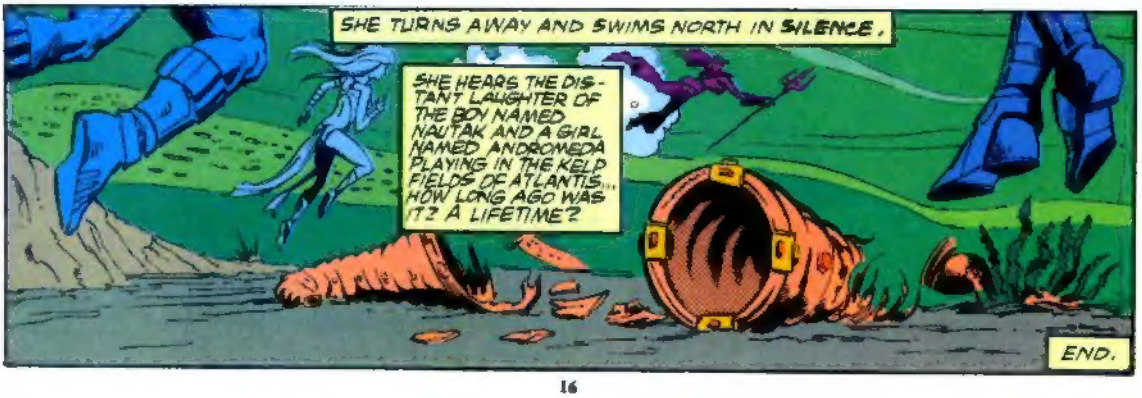
...BUT FROM THE FACT THAT ATTUMA HAD BEEN IN CONTROL OF IT ALL THIS TIME.
BOTH SIDES STRAGGLE FROM THE FORMER WEAPONS CACHE; NUMBERS DIMINISHED, AS THE SEA MONSTER BURIES ITSELF UNDER TONS OF RUBBLE.

THEY WADE ACROSS THE SHELLED PLAIN --ATLANTEAN SOLDIERS, ATLANTEAN REBELS.
BATTLE IS FORGOTTEN FOR THE TIME. BANDAGES OF SEAWEED AND SPLINTS OF WHALEBONE ARE THE ONLY THINGS HOLDING THEM TOGETHER.

YOU WOULD HAVE ACTED IN THE SAME MANNER AS I! YOUR FATHER IS ATTUMA! HOW COULD YOU HAVE EXPECTED US TO TRULY TRUST YOU? WE ARE HOMO MERMANUS, BUT WE ARE NOT PERFECT, BY NEPTUNE!
NO, "WE'RE" NOT.

HEAR ME NOW, BLUE-GILLS.
LOOK UPON THE WEAPON--THE HORN--THAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR TODAY'S OUTCOME. BY TRYING TO STAY FURTHER BLOODSHED, I UNWITTINGLY CAUSED MORE!
NO ONE SHOULD WIELD SUCH POWER--NOT ATTUMA, NOT NAUTAK, NOT I AND NOT YOU, XIOMARA...

I KNOW THAT YOU WOULD ACT IN THE SAME MANNER, YOU BEING EQUALLY AS NOBLE AS I.
KRUNCH


SHE TURNS AWAY AND SWIMS NORTH IN SILENCE.
SHE HEARS THE DISTANT LAUGHTER OF THE BOY NAMED NAUTAK AND A GIRL NAMED ANDROMEDA PLAYING IN THE KELP FIELDS OF ATLANTIS... HOW LONG AGO WAS IT? A LIFETIME?
END.